

## 810 Histoire sociale / Social History

GENTILE, Patrizia and Jane Nicholas (eds.) – *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. Pp. 428.

*Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History* aims, as pointedly noted by editors Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas, “to position the contested body as another category of analysis towards understanding both Canadian history and the nation” (pp. 3). Within this volume is an assortment of essays from well-established and emerging scholars that approach embodiment and body history through the utilization of a diverse methodological kit. Bodies have long intrigued scholars interested in Canadian history, but mostly as abstract vessels through which other topics have been explored. The novel contribution of this collection derives from its engagement with the process of embodiment and materialization of the body, defined not as a conduit for change but as maker (and unmaker) of change itself.

Many theorists such as Marcel Mauss, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler provide the analytical framework upon which many of the authors in this volume situate their research. While other approaches differ, each chapter explores fluid conceptualizations of the body and nation in a Canadian context. In part one of three, “Contesting Meaning(s) of Bodies and Nations,” authors investigate the impact of the body and embodiment in the production of knowledge. First amongst a great selection is Kathryn Harvey’s first-hand account of her archival experience as a doctoral student. Harvey’s archival and sensory reading of her subject David Ross McCord’s written and material record fostered in her the understanding that “history is made through bodies, both alive and dead,” and it is therefore the challenge of the historian to bring “somatic awareness” to the process by which bodies experience “every state identified with the human condition” (pp. 32-34). In recognizing the somatic presence of her own body as well as that of her research subject, Harvey’s essay introduces novel and exciting aspects to our understanding of historical objectivity and archival methodology. Barrington Walker and Amy Shaw also deliver interesting examinations, interpreting the body through discourses of race and masculinity respectively, while Gillian Poulter broaches the subject of cultural appropriation in an intriguing essay on Indigenous sports in nineteenth century Montreal.

The remaining two parts, “(Re)fashioning the Body” and “Regulating Bodies,” comprise the majority of the volume. In these sections and not unlike the first, authors insert material bodies into their analyses. Essays cover a range of topics, including: representations of the body in fashion (Myra Rutherdale and George Colpitts), art (Pandora Syperek), dance (Allana Lindgren), advertisements (Cheryl Krasnick Warsh and Greg Marquis), and beauty pageants (Mary-Ann Shantz and Tarah Brookfield); as well as bodily regulation of “obese” children (Wendy Mitchinson), medical women (Valerie Minnett), Second World War women (Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich), the working class (Anne Frances Toews), and postwar working women (Kristina Llewellyn and Bonnie Reilly Schmidt). Positioning the contested body as another category of analysis, these essays explore the ways in which social constructions combine with discourses

of nation in the making and unmaking of bodies, and attempt to demonstrate the role of embodied materialization in the formation of national identities. They also stress, as convincingly pointed out by the editors in the exceptional introduction to this volume, that categories of embodiment like gender, class, race, sexuality, age, and health “shape and define the nation as well as ideas of what the nation is and who is reflected within its often-singular representations” (pp. 10).

Mutually cohesive in tone and purpose, each essay contributes to an argumentative framework that challenges conceptualizations of Canada. Defined by Gentile and Nicholas as a mythological “monolithic national community,” the conceptual nation examined in this volume, is imagined and lived largely through the experiences of White, heterosexual, and middle class Canadians (pp. 4). Situated in a colonial context, where embodiment is interpreted through power relations and the mechanisms of imaginary corporeal identifiers, the nation-state and its typified puppeteers bear the brunt of thorough research and potent analyses. The volume is not without its limitations, however. In a work which purports to position both bodies and nations in “perpetual contest and contestation,” the body seems stronger in resonance (pp. 4). The nation is certainly contested but generally speaking the body and embodiment find more direct attention amongst the authors.

Links between the state of bodies and nation could additionally be strengthened with the inclusion of analysis into the impact of geography and climate in the production of bodies. Considering the role of the environment in this regard may further add to our understanding of cultural appropriation as specifically facilitated through the body, which itself constitutes a strong sub-theme in *Contesting Bodies*. Rutherford's essay seems most appropriate in this regard. Like Poulter, she too explores ideas of cultural emulation and appropriation but through the interplay between fashion, clothing, and bodies in the early twentieth century. Highlighting in particular the development of a “hybridized” fashion consciousness between North America's northern Indigenous and southern newcomer populations, Rutherford's essay speaks to racialized aspects of embodiment and colonization (pp. 130). Dress and hygienic practices are interpreted herein as cultural phenomena, and seeming slightly removed from the necessity of human survival. Delineation of the body is a task further complicated by the inclusion of environmental consideration, but it is an effort that may yield additional insight to that already produced by the deep analyses of this volume.

As a whole, *Contesting Bodies* makes clear that ideas about the body and nation should not be dichotomized in study. Rather than define what the limits of body scholarship should be, the essays in this collection provide a base upon which to further investigate the interplay of bodies and conceptualizations of the nation in a Canadian context. As an introductory yet inclusive and sophisticated reader, this volume provides an access point into an exciting area of research that will continue to inform those interested in Canadian studies of both a past and contemporary focus. Historians, social scientists, and cultural theorists have much to gain from a deep engagement with this unique collection. The editors and contributors have thus done a service that sets a high bar, challenging further

scholarship across a range of disciplinary fields to produce equally compelling analyses and considerations.

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GOULD, Andrew C. and Anthony M. Messina (eds.) – *Europe's Contending Identities: Supranationalism, Ethnoregionalism, Religion, and the New Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. 285

The volume is concerned with the vexed question of how 'European' is Europe and whether or not a European identity is likely to consolidate in Europe. The assumptions informing the volume are that, on the one side, a degree of collective identity is necessary for any kind of political community and, on the other side, some evidence can be found for such an identity on a European level. The key question is how extensive is it. It is evident that a strong case for a supranational identity cannot be sustained, but it is equally true that Europe is some sort of reality. The editors, in their theoretical introduction, are in accord with the general perspective that is now much agreed on in other studies that European identity is not simply one thing but multiple. However, they correctly object to the tendency to over-pluralise identity to a point that it ceases to have any real content. They thus argue that a political identity, such as European identity, must have some degree of group boundness and with this comes a certain sense of group specificity that inevitably entails a distinction between an 'us' and a 'them.' On this uncontroversial basis the editors make a case for the necessity of European identity, if it is to exist at all, as a relative coherent political identity that is constantly challenged by counter-vailing tendencies that invoke national identities.

The studies collected in the volume are addressed to what the editors see as three key challenges that severely test the viability of a European political community developing a coherent post-national identity. The ten chapters, in addition to a lengthy Introduction and Conclusion, offer very detailed analyses of ethnoregionalism, the new nationalism and ethnic religiosity as potentially challenging the viability of a European identity. The studies, which are informed by very orthodox political science analysis, offer sound empirically based evidence that challenges strong claims on European identity, but overall are on balance cautious of drawing conclusions that suggest a dominant trend. Their view is that a European polity does not as such exist and that while there is some evidence of a European political identity taking shape it is not being consciously or very enthusiastically embraced by Europeans.

The volume is organized into four parts. The first part contains two general theoretically driven accounts of European identity. The first of these by Citrin and Wright sees national identity tempering European identity and the second